

## Government rejects water rate increase



*Sends WEB, Elmar and Utilities back to the drawing board to come up with a social rate*



Sergei, 11, waits his turn to receive donated food during an aid humanitarian distribution in Bucha, in the outskirts of Kyiv, on Tuesday, April 19, 2022.

Associated Press



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# U.N.: 2.3 billion people severely or moderately hungry in 2021

From Front

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**  
Associated Press

**UNITED NATIONS (AP)** — World hunger rose in 2021, with around 2.3 billion people facing moderate or severe difficulty obtaining enough to eat -- and that was before the Ukraine war, which has sparked increases in the cost of grain, fertilizer and energy, according to a U.N. report released Wednesday.

"The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" paints a grim picture, based on 2021 data, saying the statistics "should dispel any lingering doubts that the world is moving backwards in its efforts to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms." "The most recent evidence available suggests that the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet around the world rose by 112 million to almost 3.1 billion, reflecting the impacts of rising consumer food prices during the (COVID-19) pandemic," the heads of five U.N. agencies that published the report said in the forward.

They warned that the war in Ukraine, which began on Feb. 24, "is disrupting supply chains and further af-



**An Ethiopian woman stands by sacks of wheat to be distributed by the Relief Society of Tigray in the town of Agula, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia Saturday, May 8, 2021.**

Associated Press

fecting prices of grain, fertilizer and energy" resulting in more price increases in the first half of 2022. At the same time, they said, more frequent and extreme climate events are also disrupting supply chains, especially in low-income countries.

Ukraine and Russia together accounted for almost a third of the world's wheat and barley exports and half of its sunflower oil, while Russia and its ally Belarus are the world's No. 2 and 3 producers of potash, a key ingredient of fertilizer.

"The global price spikes in food, fuel and fertilizers that we are seeing as a result of the crisis in Ukraine threatened to push countries

around the world into famine," World Food Program Executive Director David Beasley said at a U.N. event launching the report. "The result will be global destabilization, starvation and mass migration on an unprecedented scale."

He said in an online briefing that WFP's latest analysis reveals that "a record 345 million acutely hungry people are marching to the brink of starvation," and "a staggering 50 million people in 45 countries are just one step away from famine."

There's a real danger that the number of people facing famine will rise in the coming months, Beasley said, urging world leaders "to act today to avert this

looming catastrophe."

According to the report, of the estimated 2.3 billion people who were moderately or severely "food insecure" in 2021, the number facing severe food insecurity rose to about 924 million.

The prevalence of "under-nourishment" -- where food consumption is insufficient to maintain an active and healthy life -- is used to measure hunger. Under-nourishment continued to rise in 2021, and the report estimates that between 702 million and 828 million people faced hunger last year.

The report said hunger kept rising in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021, but at a slower pace than from 2019 to 2020.

"In 2021, hunger affected 278 million people in Africa, 425 million in Asia and 56.5 million in Latin America and the Caribbean," it said.

U.N. development goals call for ending extreme poverty and hunger by 2030, but the report says projections indicate that 8% of the world's population -- nearly 670 million people -- will be facing hunger at the end of the decade. That's the same number of people as in 2015 when the

goals were adopted.

The gender gap in food insecurity, which grew during the COVID-19 pandemic, widened even further from 2020 to 2021, the report said.

Driven largely by widening differences in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in Asia, it said that "in 2021, 31.9% of women in the world were moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6% of men."

In 2020, the report said, an estimated 22% of children under the age of 5 -- or 149 million -- had stunted growth and development while 6.7% -- or 45 million -- suffered from wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition. At the other end of the scale, it said 5.7% of youngsters under 5, or 39 million, were overweight.

"Looking forward, the gains we made in reducing the prevalence of child stunting by one-third in the previous two decades -- translating into 55 million fewer children with stunting -- are under threat by the triple crises of climate, conflict, and the COVID-19 pandemic," the five U.N. agency chiefs said. "Without intensified efforts, the number of children with wasting will only increase." □



**Robert Downey Jr. signs autographs as he arrives at the premiere of "Avengers: Endgame" at the Los Angeles Convention Center, April 22, 2019.**

Associated Press

By **MATTHEW DALY**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Energy Department is teaming with actor Robert Downey Jr. to recruit up to

1,000 new workers focused on climate change and clean energy.

Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm on Wednesday released a video with the

## Granholm, actor Robert Downey Jr. boost clean energy jobs

"Iron Man" actor encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds to join the department's "clean energy corps" and take on jobs aimed at accelerating deployment of clean energy such as wind and solar power.

Participants will help build thousands of miles of electric transmission lines to carry wind and solar power and take on other jobs to research, develop and deploy ways to produce energy while cutting planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, Granholm said. The new job corps is part of \$62 billion awarded to the Energy Department under the bipartisan infrastruc-

ture law signed last year by President Joe Biden.

In the animated video, Downey says viewers may know him from one of his "many day jobs" as a billionaire superhero in "Iron Man" or "world's greatest detective," Sherlock Holmes.

"But now I've got this sweet new office over the Department of Energy, and I've already been putting in some crazy hours helping out the Clean Energy Corps," Downey says. "I've been working with some amazing people on fantastic new solutions" to climate change.

Granholm, who also appears the video, tells

Downey the Energy Department is "looking for folks to help us with pretty much everything," from scientists to IT specialists, civil engineers, electrical engineers and more.

"My gosh, we mean everybody!" exclaims Downey, holding a coffee cup declaring him the "world's best DOE intern."

"So why not come work with us and help the planet while you are at it?" he adds, as Granholm extols the "nice" benefits, including a healthier Earth.

The video will be played on the Energy Department's YouTube channel and featured on social media. □



## U.S. to diversify infant formula industry to avoid shortages

By ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Biden administration is trying to help foreign makers of baby formula stay on the U.S. market for the long term, in an effort to diversify the industry after the closure of the largest domestic plant sparked a nationwide shortage.

The Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday announced plans to help overseas producers that have sent supplies to the United States, under emergency approval to address the shortfall, secure long-term authorization to market their formula in the U.S.

The agency will provide a way for producers temporarily selling in the U.S. to meet existing regulatory requirements so they can stay on the market, providing consumers with more choices and making supplies more resilient against current and future shortages.

The FDA will also host meetings and provide producers with a single point of contact to work through the regulatory system to make the application process more efficient.

"The need to diversify and



**Similac Alimentum Hypoallergenic Infant Formula, imported from Puerto Rico, is for sale at a Stew Leonard's grocery store in Yonkers, New York, June 10, 2022.**

strengthen the U.S. infant formula supply is more important than ever," said the FDA commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, and Susan Mayne, the director of the agency's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, in a statement. "The recent shutdown of a major infant formula plant, compounded by unforeseen natural weather events, has shown just how vulnerable the supply chain has become."

The U.S. has tried to boost supply of baby formula after regulators in February shuttered a Michigan plant run by Abbott, the largest domestic manufacturer of baby formula, over safety concerns. The plant reopened June 4 after the company committed to additional sanitizing and safety protocols, but closed again in mid-June after severe weather caused damage to the plant.

The company said it needs

time to assess damage and sanitize the factory again after severe thunderstorms and heavy rains swept through southwestern Michigan on June 13.

In May, the FDA eased federal import regulations to allow baby formula to be shipped to the U.S., and President Joe Biden authorized the use of the Defense Production Act, providing federal support to get formula from overseas into the U.S. The White House

said that by this coming Sunday, its efforts will have brought 43 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of infant formula into the U.S. and FDA has cleared the equivalent of 400 million 8-ounce bottles for import into the U.S. "Infant formula is an essential food product that is the sole source of nutrition for many babies in the U.S. Companies and their manufacturing facilities must meet rigorous FDA standards that ensure the formula is both safe and nutritious," Califf and Mayne said. "These standards are necessary to protect our children and will not be sacrificed for long-term supply considerations."

The FDA's policy of temporary enforcement discretion is set to expire in November, but the administration says it will renew it if necessary to ensure domestic supply.

"Today's announcement by the FDA will help ensure the infant formula supply market is less vulnerable to future supply shocks and will provide families with the confidence of steady access to a variety of safe infant formulas," said White House spokesman Kevin Munoz. □

Associated Press

## Feds sue over new Arizona citizenship proof law for voting

By BOB CHRISTIE

Associated Press

**PHOENIX (AP)** — The U.S. Department of Justice on Tuesday sued Arizona over a new law requiring people who use a federal form to register to vote to provide additional proof of citizenship if they want to vote for president or using the state's popular vote-by-mail system.

The law signed by Republican Gov. Doug Ducey on March 30 is in direct conflict with a 1993 federal voter registration law and also violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964, according to the Justice Department. The law adds requirements for the federal form directly rejected by the U.S.

Supreme Court in a 2013 Arizona case. The Republican-controlled Legislature was well aware of the federal law and the Supreme Court decision written by the late conservative icon, Justice Antonin Scalia. But they went ahead anyway, arguing the new law would boost election security. Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the department's civil rights division called the new law that goes into effect in January "a textbook violation of the National Voter Registration Act."

She said the National Voter Registration Act has helped eliminate requirements that make it hard to register to vote. "Arizona

has passed a law that turns the clock back on progress by imposing unlawful and unnecessary requirements that would block eligible voters from the registration rolls for certain federal elections," Clarke said in a statement.

The law violates the Civil Rights Act by requiring election officials to reject registration forms if they contain a mistake or leave out information that is not needed to determine someone's right to vote, she said.

Ducey said in a March 30 signing letter that the law is designed to address a growing number of voters who registered using the federal form who did



**Arizona Republican Gov. Doug Ducey gives his state of the state address at the Arizona Capitol, Monday, Jan. 10, 2022, in Phoenix.**

Associated Press

not have to provide proof that they are citizens. The state's voters added the citizenship proof requirement in 2004 when they enacted Proposition 200, but it does not apply to the federal form.

Ducey spokesman C.J. Karamargin declined to

comment, saying the administration doesn't comment on litigation. Republican Attorney General Mark Brnovich, who is running for U.S. Senate, told the Justice Department in a July 1 letter that he would defend the law to the fullest. □



# Wisconsin court: Sex trafficking can be defense for homicide



Chrystul Kizer, right, and her attorney Larisa Benitez-Morgan sit together in the Kenosha County Courthouse on Feb. 6, 2020.

Associated Press

By **TODD RICHMOND**  
Associated Press

**MADISON, Wis. (AP)** — A woman accused of killing a man can argue at trial that she was justified because he was sexually trafficking her, Wisconsin's Supreme Court ruled Wednesday in a decision that could help define the limits of legal immunity for trafficking victims nationwide.

The justices ruled 4-3 that a 2008 state law that absolves trafficking victims of criminal liability for any offenses committed as a direct result of being trafficked extends to first-degree intentional homicide. However, they said Chrystul Kizer must first provide evidence for a trial judge that her decision to kill Randall Volar was connected to being trafficked before she can invoke immunity.

"Chrystul Kizer deserves a chance to present her defense and today's decision will allow her to do that," Kizer's attorney, Katie York, said. "While the legal process on this matter is far from over, we, along with Chrystul and her family, believe the decision today affirms the legal rights provided by Wisconsin statute to victims of sex trafficking facing criminal charges."

Kizer, 22, contends she met Volar on a sex-trafficking website. She says he sexually assaulted her and sold her to others for sex. According to court documents, Kizer put a gun in her bookbag in June 2018 and told her boyfriend that

she was going to shoot Volar because she was tired of him touching her.

She traveled from Milwaukee to Volar's home in Kenosha, shot him in the head, burned down his house and stole his BMW, according to court documents. Kizer was 17 at the time, old enough to be considered an adult in Wisconsin's criminal justice system. She faces multiple charges, including arson and first-degree intentional homicide, which carries a mandatory life sentence.

Nearly 40 states have passed laws that give trafficking victims at least some level of criminal immunity, according to Legal Action of Wisconsin, which provides legal help for low-income people.

Kizer's attorneys had planned to invoke Wisconsin's immunity law at her trial, but Kenosha County Circuit Judge David Wilk refused to allow it. He ruled that immunity extends only to trafficking-related charges such as restraining someone, extortion, prostitution or slave labor. An appellate court ruled last year, however, that Kizer could argue that the law shields her from prosecution.

State attorneys asked the high court to reverse that decision, maintaining that the immunity statutes can't possibly extend to homicide. Assistant Attorney General Timothy Barber argued in March that Kizer's interpretation would cre-

ate an unprecedented expansion of the self-defense doctrine, eliminating any questions about whether killing someone was reasonable or necessary.

The court found that the extent of trafficking victims' immunity is ambiguous but doesn't include any limiting language and therefore applies to homicide. If Kizer can show a connection between her actions and being trafficked, prosecutors will have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defense doesn't apply, the court said.

"The defendant must produce some evidence on which a reasonable jury could find that the defense applies," Justice Rebecca Dallet, a liberal, wrote for the majority. "Thus our interpretation does not create the kind of blanket immunity for victims of human trafficking that the State fears." Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul said the decision "brings needed clarity regarding the scope of the affirmative defense for survivors of the vile crime of human trafficking."

The Wisconsin Supreme Court decision isn't binding on other states but could inform attorney strategies in similar cases elsewhere in the country, legal experts say. Anti-violence groups lined up to support Kizer, filing briefs saying that trafficking victims often feel so trapped they believe they have to take matters into their own hands.

Ian Henderson, policy and systems director for the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, one of the groups that signed onto the briefs, praised the court's decision. He said trafficking victims often react out of a flight-or-fight mentality and the ruling "avoids them being criminalized for defending themselves."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are sexual assault victims, but Kizer discussed her case in an interview from jail with The Washington Post that was published in 2019. □



As the Electra Fire approaches, Sutter Creek Police Officer McKeon tells an elderly resident to wait for him to jump start her car while evacuating residents in the Pine Acres community of Amador County, Calif., on Tuesday, July 5, 2022.

Associated Press

## New evacuations for communities near California forest fire

**JACKSON, Calif. (AP)** — Evacuation orders were expanded Tuesday for remote California communities near a wildfire that may have been sparked by fireworks or a barbecue on the Fourth of July in a mountainous region that's a top tourism destination.

The Electra Fire in Sierra Nevada Gold Country broke out Monday afternoon and tripled in size to about 6.1 square miles (15.8 square kilometers). It was 5% contained Tuesday night.

The fire was making short, uphill runs, fire officials said.

"The rate of spread isn't what it was like yesterday, but it is still spreading," said Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman. He said firefighters were working to keep flames confined to unpopulated canyon areas.

Mandatory evacuation orders and warnings combined affected up to 700 residents in Amador County and 300 to 400 people in Calaveras County, Redman said. Evacuation centers were set up for people and animals.

The fire started at a recreation area that was packed with people, forcing 85 to 100 celebrating the holiday at a river to take shelter at a Pacific Gas & Electric Co. facility, Redman said. All

were later safely evacuated.

"This was the closest I've ever been to a fire. It was literally within feet of us," said Milka Mikula of Valley Springs, who had gone to the river with her husband, her 5-year-old daughter and her 1-year-old son.

They had to wait about six hours before they could finally start for home, she told KCRA-TV.

"I just wanted to get home. I just wanted to get out of there with my babies. I was shaking really, really bad for quite some time," Mikula said.

Redman said the cause of the fire was not known, but that it started in the Vox Beach area of the North Fork Mokelumne River. He said that could suggest fireworks or a barbecue as a potential cause.

More than 100 fire engines, 1,200 firefighters and 14 helicopters were sent to the fire, which was a threat to power infrastructure, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. The terrain was described as steep and rugged.

Cal Fire activated an incident management team for the fire. The teams "are made up of trained personnel who provide operational management and support to large-scale, expanding incidents," Cal Fire said. □



# U.S., U.K. leaders raise fresh alarms about Chinese espionage

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — The head of the FBI and the leader of Britain's domestic intelligence agency raised alarms Wednesday about the Chinese government, warning business leaders that Beijing is determined to steal their technology for competitive gain.

FBI Director Christopher Wray reaffirmed previous concerns in denouncing economic espionage and hacking operations by China as well as the Chinese government's efforts to stifle dissent abroad. But his speech was notable because it took place at MI5's London headquarters and alongside the agency's director general, Ken McCallum, in an intended show of Western solidarity.

It also showed the extent to which Wray and the FBI regard the Chinese government as not only a law enforcement and intelligence challenge, but are also attuned to the implications of Beijing's foreign policy actions.

"We consistently see that it's the Chinese government that poses the biggest long-term threat to our economic and national se-



Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Christopher Wray testifies during a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the fiscal year 2023 budget for the FBI in Washington, May 25, 2022.

Associated Press

curity, and by 'our,' I mean both of our nations, along with our allies in Europe and elsewhere," Wray said.

Officials described it as the first time that leaders of the FBI and MI5 had shared a stage for a joint speech.

McCallum said the Chinese government and its "covert pressure across the globe" amounts to "the most game-changing challenge we face." "This might

feel abstract. But it's real and it's pressing," McCallum said. "We need to talk about it. We need to act." A spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, Liu Pengyu, said in an emailed statement that China "firmly opposes and combats all forms of cyber attacks" and called U.S. accusations groundless. (And then later, in response to the Taiwan material,

can we also add a sentence saying: The embassy spokesman said the Taiwan issue was "purely China's internal affair" and that when it comes to questions of China's territory and sovereignty, the country has no room for compromise or concession."

In a nod to current tensions between China and Taiwan, Wray said any forcible takeover of Taipei by

Beijing would "would represent one of the most horrific business disruptions the world has ever seen."

Last week, the U.S. government's director of national intelligence said there were no indications Chinese President Xi Jinping was poised to take Taiwan by military force. Avril Haines did say Xi appeared to be planning for that potential action as part of a broader goal of reunification of Taiwan.

After the appearance with his British counterpart, Wray said that he would leave to others the question of whether an invasion of Taiwan was more or less likely after Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine. "I don't have any reason to think their interest in Taiwan has abated in any fashion," Wray said, adding that he hoped China had learned what happens "when you overplay your hand," as he said the Russians have done in Ukraine.

The FBI director said there are signs the Chinese, perhaps drawing lessons from Russia's experience since the war, have looked for ways to "insulate their economy" against potential sanctions. □

# Putin's aide warns U.S. against pressing for war crimes court

**MOSCOW (AP)** — A top Kremlin official warned the U.S. Wednesday that it could face the "wrath of God" if it pursues efforts to help establish an international tribunal to investigate Russia's action in Ukraine, while the Russian lower house speaker urged Washington to remember that Alaska used to belong to Russia. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, denounced the U.S. for what he described as its efforts to "spread chaos and destruction across the world for the sake of 'true democracy.'"

"The entire U.S. history since the times of subjugation of the native Indian population represents a series of

bloody wars," Medvedev charged in a long diatribe on his Telegram channel, pointing out the U.S. nuclear bombing of Japan during World War II and the war in Vietnam. "Was anyone held responsible for those crimes? What tribunal condemned the sea of blood spilled by the U.S. there?" Responding to the U.S.-backed calls for an international tribunal to prosecute the perceived war crimes by Russia in Ukraine, Medvedev rejected it as an attempt by the U.S. "to judge others while staying immune from any trial."

"It won't work with Russia, they know it well," Medvedev concluded. "That's why the rotten dogs of war are barking in such a disgusting way."

"The U.S. and its useless stooges should remember the words of the Bible: Do not judge and you will not be judged ... so that the great day of His wrath doesn't come to their home one day," Medvedev said, referring to the Apocalypse.

He noted that the "idea to punish a country with the largest nuclear potential is absurd and potentially creates the threat to mankind's existence."

The warning follows a series of tough statements from Putin and his officials that pointed at the Russian nuclear arsenals to warn the West against interfering with Moscow's action in Ukraine.

Medvedev, who served as Russia's president in 2008-

2012 when Putin shifted into the prime minister's post due to term limits, was widely seen by the West as more liberal compared with his mentor.

In recent months, however, he has made remarks that have sounded much tougher than those issued by the most hawkish Kremlin officials. □



Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman and the head of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev speaks during a meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, Wednesday, July 6, 2022.

Associated Press



# Mexican navy sets net hooks in bid to help vaquita porpoise

By MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — The Mexican navy said Tuesday it has begun a controversial plan to drop concrete blocks onto the bottom of the Gulf of California to snag illegal nets that drown critically endangered vaquita marina porpoises. As few as eight of the tiny, elusive porpoises remain in the Gulf, also known as the Sea of Cortez. It is the only place they live, and they cannot be captured and bred in captivity.

Vaquitas become trapped and drown in gill nets fishermen set illegally for totoaba, a fish whose swim bladder is a delicacy in China and sells for thousands of dollars per pound (kilogram). The Mexican government has largely abandoned efforts to keep small fishing boats out of a 110-square-mile (288-square kilometer) "zero tolerance" area near San Felipe, Baja California, where the few remaining vaquita have been seen. Environmentalists said Tuesday the plan to sink 193 concrete blocks was approved with no public comment and expressed



This undated file photo provided by The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows a vaquita porpoise.

concerns that the metal hooks attached to the blocks may accumulate remnants of nets that could continue to entangle and drown sea life.

"This is a total surprise, because the environmental impact statement was approved in record time, in six weeks. It wasn't opened to public comment," said Alex Olivera, the Mexico representative for the Center for Biological Diversity. Mexico's Environment Department acknowledged

there had been no public comment, but said that was because nobody had requested one.

Doubts about the plan abound. It would scatter one block, with a metal hook attached, every one kilometer over the zero tolerance area. It is not clear how, or whether, any snagged nets would be recovered from underwater. "A net can be snagged on these hooks, and we don't know, we're talking about nets that are hundreds

of yards (meters) long, so we don't know if a net snagged down there might be a double-edged sword, and trap vaquitas," said Olivera.

Abandoned nets, known as "ghost nets," can continue killing marine life for years. Another expert, who did not want to be cited by name out of concern over reprisals, said the plan might discourage the illegal fishermen by causing them to lose nets to the snags.

Associated Press

But he added that it would be crucial for the navy to regularly clear out any snagged nets, "or other species could be killed down there."

In a statement announcing the plan, the navy made a vague mention of "recovering detained nets." In practice, it would probably require divers to descend and manually cut nets off each of the 193 blocks every few days.

Given the defiance of the fishermen and the lucrative nature of the illegal trade in dried totoaba bladders, there is also no guarantee that fishermen might not mark either physically or with GPS the location of the blocks and fish around them. Last year, the Mexican government abandoned the policy of keeping fishing boats out of the "zero tolerance" zone in the upper Gulf.

It then introduced a sliding scale of punishments if more than 60 fishing boats are seen in the area on multiple occasions. Olivera expressed doubts. "They can't be checking these blocks every day," he said. □

# Saudi Arabia expecting 1 million in largest hajj since virus

By AMR NABIL

Associated Press

**MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP)** — One million Muslim pilgrims were converging on Saudi Arabia's holy city of

Mecca on Wednesday for the largest hajj since the coronavirus pandemic severely curtailed access to one of Islam's five pillars. Saudi Arabia's decision to

allow some 850,000 Muslims from abroad to make the annual pilgrimage, which begins on Thursday, marks a major step toward normalcy after two years of a drastically scaled-down hajj restricted to Saudi residents.

The 1 million foreign and domestic pilgrims participating is still far less than the 2.5 million Muslims who traveled in 2019 for the pilgrimage, typically one of the world's largest gatherings. Those performing the ritual this year must be under 65, vaccinated against the coronavirus and have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours of travel. The pilgrims are chosen from millions of applicants through an online lottery system.

Saudi officials inspected

the holy site on Wednesday and stressed their "readiness" to receive pilgrims with the goal of "maintaining public health." After the coronavirus struck in 2020, Saudi authorities allowed just 1,000 pilgrims already residing in the kingdom to attend, prompting historians to compare the disruption to the site's storming by religious extremists and dramatic closure in 1979.

Last year, the hajj was similarly restricted to 60,000 fully vaccinated Muslims living in Saudi Arabia. The unprecedented curbs sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world, devastating many believers who had spent years saving up for the religious rite.

This year, however, Saudi authorities are keen to relax virus curbs. Religious pil-

grimages brought in \$12 billion before the pandemic accounting for the largest percentage of Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product after oil. Although virus cases have risen steadily to over 500 a day in Saudi Arabia, the government lifted the country's indoor mask mandate and other virus precautions last month. Roughly 70% of the country has been vaccinated against the virus.

Pilgrims at the holy site this year are not required to be masked or socially distanced, as during the past two years. However, Muslims are still prohibited from kissing or touching the cube-shaped Kaaba, the metaphorical house of God at the center of Mecca that pilgrims circle as they complete the hajj. □



An African Muslim pilgrim carries her luggages as she circumambulates around the Kaaba, the cubic building at the Grand Mosque, in the Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, Tuesday, July 5, 2022.

Associated Press



## Government rejects water rate increase

### *Sends WEB, Elmar and Utilities back to the drawing board to come up with a social rate*

Recently, water production company WEB informed the community of Aruba through a press release that the water rate would increase. Regarding this development, minister of Energy, Glenbert Croes informed during a recent press conference that this decision was rejected by the government.

The government, as shareholder in the Utilities company, and Utilities as shareholder of WEB, had to suspend the decision and announcement made, taking into consideration that the cost of living is already too high, and water and electricity are basic needs.

Minister Croes explained that for 7 long months (since the last hedging finished) they asked WEB and (electricity company) Elmar for them to absorb the increase in price – mainly the result of the increase in price of oil worldwide. At the same time it is understood that currently they are in a very difficult situation and cannot keep absorbing the increase anymore. The question now remains if the price of water and electricity will go up, how and in which way this will be done.



“At the end of the 90's, I was myself the minister in charge of Utilities and back then we came up with the rate structure that is in

place until today. The structure means that someone who uses a small amount of water pays less, because they use less. Thus the structure rewards those who use

water in a conscious way”, Croes explained.

#### **Precarious situation at WEB and Elmar**

Currently the government is aware and understands the precarious situation of WEB and Elmar, and thus understands that the rates must go up. But this has to come in a way that those who have ‘wide shoulders’ – meaning, more means – will have to pay more, and must have consideration of the group who doesn't.

Regarding the rate structure, must also take into consideration situations where for example, some families went to live together because of necessity. In this case, if you only look at the amount consumed, this could give the impression that a family can pay more, but in reality, it is because of necessity that they live together and cannot survive on their own. Croes explained that taking this type of situations into consideration, the Department of Social Affairs (DAS) must be involved – and so a dialogue was held with the minister in charge of that department, Rocco Tjon. This way, it is possible to avoid that cases like the above mentioned fall into

a rate structure without taking their social situation into consideration. DAS will have to do an ‘intake’, verify and confirm the social situation, and then refer these cases to WEB and Elmar so they can fall into a socially fair category in the rate structure.

Minister Croes confirmed that the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Economy, together with Utilities, WEB, Elmar and other departments are working together to figure out how they can translate the price increase that must be introduced into a fairer way.

In his conclusion, minister Croes said that he has hope that the experts will have completed this task by next week and will make an announcement. He recognizes that he cannot put the future of our state companies WEB, Elmar and Utilities in danger, and thus the emphasis remains on the way in which the rate increase will be introduced – so that it will be socially fair. “It is a decision no one wants to make, but this decision must be made in the general interest, which includes the interest of the companies as well”, Croes said. □

## Minister working to revitalize city centre through agreement between government and architect bureau O4IA

**For the past few months, a variety of preparation works were completed related to the plan to revitalize Oranjestad. Minister of Economic Affairs, Communication and Sustainable Development, Mr. Geoffrey Wever, held a meeting with various stakeholders in this phase of preparations, in order to get a wide view of the current needs, as well as take inventory of the requirements – legal, commercial, infrastructural, etc. – in order to revitalize Aruba's city centre.**

During the first work meet-

ing last Tuesday, 5th of July, the official act of signing between the ministry of Economic Affairs, Communication and Sustainable Development with the company Office for Infrastructure & Architecture VBA took place.

In the context of the plan to revitalize Oranjestad, it will be important to visualize designs in order to have better planning. Architect Mr. Raffy Kock, owner of O4IA, was approached seeing his knowledge and existing experience in projects of this magnitude.

O4IA will have the main task of translating the vision into a concrete plan and design, of just value and one that can be executed realistically.

“We are going to have to highlight that which makes the city centre unique, and promote new economic activity for the area beyond simply shopping”, minister Wever commented. The consultations with all stakeholders will continue during and after this current process, to guarantee that this plan can reflect the needs and desires of



everyone who is part of our city centre, and also for all our visitors, according to a press release from the government.

“In the next months ahead

we will be moving closer to the realization of the plan to revitalize the city centre, and will keep sharing this with our community”, minister Geoffrey Wever said. □



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## Meeting with PAHO regarding healthcare projects in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – On July 1, 2022, the Minister of Tourism and Public Health, Mr. Dangui Oduber, held a meeting with the members of the Pan American Health Organization PAHO.



This meeting was on the various projects the Ministry of Public Health is executing in the upcoming months.

PAHO has an essential role in our healthcare system. They have been working closely with the Aruba authorities to improve healthcare service and quality in Aruba. Currently, they are working together on the prevention policy, in which Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are essential. In 2006, the PAHO did research in Aruba. The government used the collected information to generate data about the island's general health.

the Ministry of Public Health will be organizing research that will take place in early 2023. This research will be used as the baseline to obtain information about the community.

The research aims to collect data from more or less 5000 people in the community per household. It is essential to establish policies for healthcare efficiently and on time.

During the meeting, the PAHO complimented Aruba for their continuous proactive way concerning prevention in healthcare. Prevention is a priority, and we can achieve it by working united. □

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## Paseo Herencia is always fun and exciting to visit



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### Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Paseo Herencia offering unique breakfast options such as Drunk's Denial with their Make it Your Own Crêpe Bar offering sweet and savory crêpe flavors and the option to booze it up with their Mimosa crêpe (mandarin soaked in champagne), Pina Colada (pineapples in coconut rum), Bourbon Apple, Brandy Apricot, Whiskey Pear and more. Location can be found by following the bakery smell upon arrival. Another

option is Seabarita offering you delicious breakfast options ranging from Huevos Rancheros to empanadas surrounded by a cozy picnic setting with streetside view. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast. Looking for something for the whole family? Visit TGI Fridays and choose between waffle, omelets, breakfast sandwiches and tacos starting at \$8. These restaurants are also open for lunch & dinner offering you a variety of cuisine choices. If you're looking for more unique concepts, join us for dinner at Xixon Restaurant greatly known in Miami for their Spanish inspired dishes with top notch flavors and the largest wine variety or visit The Lazy Turtle and try their exotic African dish "Kuvuta Kuku" accompanied by their tasty lazy cocktails. Coming for drinks? Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till late.

### VIP Cinema

Visit the one-of-a-kind Caribbean Cinemas VIP on the second floor of Paseo Herencia and enjoy your favorite movies in the most comfortable reclining seats with high quality screens with the latest projection and



7.1 Dolby surround sound and not to forget their delicious buttery bag of popcorn.

### Entertainment

Catch live shows from Monday to Thursday and Sunday at 8pm on the Paseo center stage and the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Looking for some adrenaline? Visit the Airsoft experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Free Spirit or the Flying mosaic hearts located behind King Churros.

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## Aruba's underwater wonderland

**ORANJESTAD** - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

### Tres Trapi



Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

### Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship,

built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.



### Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do

not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains

### Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



## Charlene Leslie with a mission to inspire, create and promote a more healthy Aruba

**Charlene Leslie is a 29 year old with a goal, to have a healthier Aruba. Charlene is a professional dietitian, and recently was certified as a sports dietitian as well. She has her own practice, Alimenta Dietetics and Health Promotion, where she focus on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.**

Charlene completed secondary school HAVO in Aruba when she was only 16 years old, and because of her young age, Charlene stayed one more year in Aruba, in order to explore her options and decide what would become the career that she wanted to pursue. "I completed the state exam in Biology VWO, and I started with Management and Organization and Economics as well because I didn't know precisely what I wanted to do. I thought maybe something related to management, but in the end really quickly I realized it was not something for me", she says.

"I knew I wanted to do something related to sport, and at first I thought to become a gym teacher, but I didn't want to become a teacher. I wanted to do something related to sports, but I didn't want to

become a teacher. After that I thought about physiotherapy, but that wasn't an option for me either. Then I looked into the option to become a sports dietitian, to help athletes with food, and then I thought that would be perfect for me because it is in the world of sports."

In 2010, Charlene went to Nijmegen in the Netherlands where she studied Alimentation and Dietetics, which she completed in 2015. She came back to Aruba that same year, and meanwhile, she started a masters course online in Epidemiology and Public Health.

Ever since she was young, Charlene practiced athletics, and up until the moment she went to the Netherlands she was active in the world of athletics. Even in the Netherlands she practiced the sport as well with the team at Nijmegen.

In 2007, Charlene spread her wings a little further and took part in the local competition, Aruba Model Search. From there, a few years later, she took part in the beauty pageant Miss Universe representing Aruba. "Through my friends who motivated me to take part in Aruba Model Search

I said, why not. And once you're in the world of modeling, the world of beauty pageants is connected to that", she says. "The world of beauty pageants wasn't really my world, but the person who always helped me, Endy Croes, every year would ask me if I wanted to compete in the pageant, and I would always say, absolutely not!"

"When I came back from the Netherlands, I saw the latest Miss Universe at the time, who was Pia Wurtzbach from the Philippines, and another one who was first runner-up for Miss USA, who looked like real people, who were beautiful on the outside but were more beautiful on the inside. This is what changed my mind, and I decided to give it a try, and it was a unique opportunity. Finally I went all the way to the Philippines for Miss Universe, and that was a beautiful experience. I wouldn't do it again, because I realized indeed that it's not my world, but while I was there, it was a beautiful experience", she says.

Charlene says that during her third and fourth years of study, she had to do various exercises for example with a client in front of her



and had to practice giving a consultation. In that moment she realized she liked this, but she found other areas more interesting, like projects and tasks she had to complete, like how to make a community change its habits. From there she realized that health promotion was what she found really interesting.

"When I came back from the Netherlands, I didn't want to work in consultation, I wanted to work in health promotion. But I didn't get an opportunity to work in that area, thus I decided to open my dietitian's clinic in 2016. By the end of that same year I got a job in IBISA in health promotion, and in 2018 when my contract at IBISA ended, I went back to consultation." In 2021 she got the opportunity to work with the Diabetes Foundation of Aruba on the PRISMA project, and from there, more projects presented themselves. She had her clinic still, but she combined consultation with various projects. "There isn't a regular day for me. Each day is different and that is precisely what I like about my job, that it's not a day from morning to afternoon

in consultation, there's a lot of variation", Charlene said.

A big problem for the population of Aruba is the numbers of overweight and obesity, which Charlene explains, together these count for almost 80 percent of the population and this is a very high percentage. She explains that even though there are a lot more people that are aware, a lot more people are active, a lot more think about what and when they eat, what she finds worrying is that there are two extremes. "You have people that are active almost every day, who eat very healthy, and that is great. But on the other extreme, you have people who do not eat healthy, eat a lot on the go, maybe drink a lot of alcohol, and are not very active", she said. "But actually in the middle, where healthy eating is normal, with regular activity without a lot of pressure, where healthy eating and lifestyle is normal, you barely see that. It is here where we need to work to help these people, so they can be a bit more aware and start with small steps towards a healthier lifestyle." □





# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 41 Happened
  - 1 Glen
  - 5 Skating category
  - 10 Tequila source
  - 12 Band-leader Shaw

- DOWN**
- 1 Parking pro
  - 2 Nimble
  - 3 Sri —
  - 4 Seth's mother
  - 5 Trim down
  - 6 District
  - 7 Use Schedule A
  - 8 Brook
  - 9 Oozed

- 24 Fill completely
- 26 Aid illegally
- 28 Crony
- 29 Humorist Barry
- 31 Archaic
- 32 Return to the Enterprise
- 36 Fill with mist
- 39 King Kong, for one
- 40 Hint of color

A	D	A	P	T	S		C	H	A	P
P	A	R	R	O	T		Y	A	L	E
E	S	T	A	T	E		G	R	E	W
			D	E	M	A	N	D		
E	C	H	O			B	U	L	G	E
A	L	A		F	R	A	S	I	E	R
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S	T	E	E	P		S	T	A	T	
		I	N	S	E	C	T			
P	I	G	S		B	R	A	C	E	D
A	C	H	E		B	E	R	A	T	E
N	E	T	S		S	W	E	D	E	N

Yesterday's answer

- 11 Lasted
- 17 LP speed unit
- 19 Yoga need
- 22 Avoid a bogey, barely
- 24 Soup cracker
- 25 Chewy, as pasta
- 27 Arthur
- 28 Movie ad
- 30 — Dhabi
- 33 New Zealand native
- 34 Sports surprise
- 35 Jury makeup
- 37 Gets on
- 38 Just
- 42 Dre's music

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
10				11		12			
13						14			
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18			19				20		
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36			37	38			39		
40					41	42			
43					44				
45						46			

7-7

A X Y D L B A X R  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-7

## CRYPTOQUOTE

X V A I F H A B E F R . G Z P P B M

A N K K I F L B N H G W K N B G . —

M F K D I A F K X V B P B M G V R

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: JULY IS HOT AFTERNOONS AND SULTRY NIGHTS AND MORNINGS WHEN IT'S JOY JUST TO BE ALIVE. — IIAL BORLAND

# How a hotel satisfaction promise has led to more discontent

By SALLY FRENCH  
of NerdWallet

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the "100% Satisfaction Guarantee" was all the rage among many hotels. The gist was simple: Encounter a problem and receive your money back. In theory, this approach addressed fairly serious issues such as early-morning pool renovations that made the jackhammer an unwelcome alarm clock. Bed bugs. No hot water. But some hospitality experts say that promise — a 100% refund if customers weren't 100% happy — might've made things worse for both the customer and the hotel. "A toddler spilling yogurt may take staff longer to clean up, evolving into a bad review about a dirty lobby and a request for refund," says Bijoy Shah, an Indiana-based travel advisor. "The 'customer-is-always-right' mindset created these guarantees, but it seems the customer learned to abuse it, as well." These days, travelers are unlikely to find such confident promises. Meanwhile, satisfaction rates are lower than ever. But it's not because the guarantee is gone. It's because it was there in the first place.

## HOTEL SATISFACTION IS WORSE THAN EVER

According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index's Travel Study 2021-2022, which interviewed 6,000 travelers between from 2021 to 2022, satisfaction fell 2.7% during that time period. Meanwhile, many hospitality workers say complaints are soaring. Things got so rough in 2021 that the Rhode Island Hospitality Association launched a "Please Be Kind Toolkit" containing mental health resources and information regarding handling unruly customers. Some attribute this year's especially high dissatisfaction rates to differences of opinions about whether the pandemic is over. "At the beginning of the pandemic, guests were sympathetic to frontline workers," says



In this Sept. 5, 2018, file photo guests stand at the front desk at the Embassy Suites by Hilton hotel in Seattle's Pioneer Square neighborhood in Seattle.

Associated Press

Andrea Stokes, hospitality practice lead at J.D. Power. "Now, consumers want to get back to normal, but the hotel industry isn't back to normal — especially in terms of staffing." While pandemic-related issues like a pause on breakfast buffets are partially to blame, the ongoing slump has been agitated — not driven — by the pandemic. In fact, ACSI's numerical scores have been trending downward over the past decade, from a peak score of 77 in 2012 to just 71 in 2022.

## THE PROBLEM WITH THE 100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEE

Some hotel experts blame the lingering effects of the 100% Satisfaction Guarantee for low customer satisfaction. Beyond eating into hotel profits (and decreasing money to invest elsewhere), it may have inadvertently adjusted consumer demands.

"Try as hard as you might — and most hotel staff bend over backwards — you can't manage everyone's unique and often-unrealistic expectations," says hospitality consultant Colleen Carswell. "You cannot please everyone." Hampton by Hilton is generally credited with creating the first-ever hotel 100% Satisfaction Guarantee (the guarantee was established before its former-parent company, Promus, was acquired by Hilton in 1999). Shruti Gandhi Buckley, global brand head for Hampton by Hilton, says

its introduction "was instrumental in providing guests confidence that they would have a seamless and problem-free stay. If their expectations weren't met, we would refund their money, no questions asked." But some travel experts suspect this trained guests to believe that complaining equals compensation. "This benefit may have even magnified negative naysayers who are always looking for something bad to point out, often in a very disrespectful manner," says Carswell.

Gandhi Buckley maintains that abuse wasn't actually the problem, adding that while "guests would sometimes have unusual rationale against invoking the guarantee," fewer than 1% of guests actually tried claiming refunds. Yet Hilton reevaluated the offer after more than a decade. Now, it's still a "100% Hampton Guarantee," but the outright refund language is gone.

"We also found the original language signaled to a guest that something could go wrong," Gandhi Buckley says.

Plus, Gandhi Buckley says that most business travelers didn't care about refunds anyway (since stays were generally on their employer's dime), and leisure travelers just wanted problems fixed. Hampton's new promise shifts away from refunds to empowering employees across all levels and departments to actually execute those fixes. □



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2 Bedroom Ocean side\$12 K  
2 Bedroom Ocean Front\$14 K  
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Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668  
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.  
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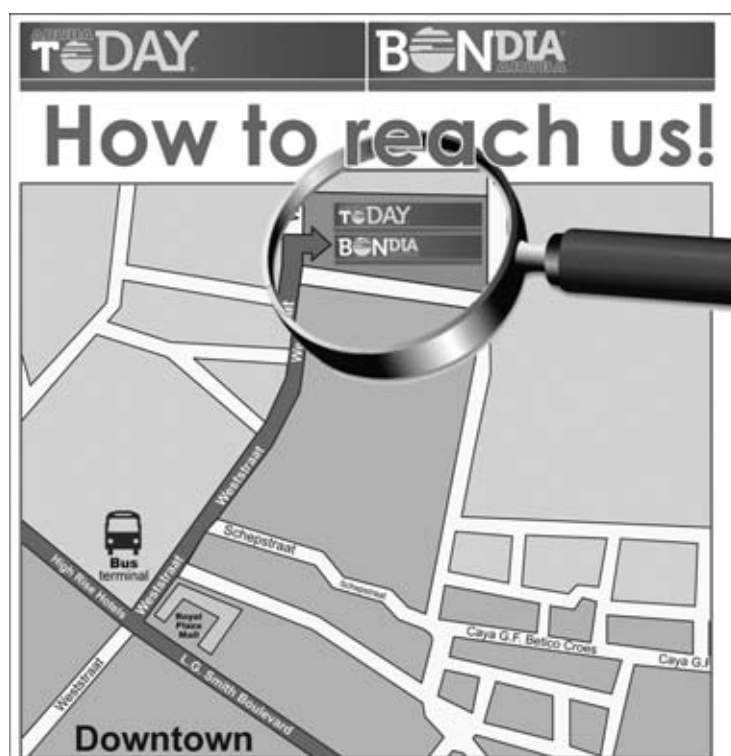
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## Review: 'Thor: Love and Thunder' is pure bonkers filmmaking



This image released by Marvel Studios shows Natalie Portman, left, and Chris Hemsworth in a scene from "Thor: Love and Thunder."

Associated Press

By **MARK KENNEDY**  
AP Entertainment Writer

The last full Thor movie was the overstuffed 2017 "Thor: Ragnarok," with the God of Thunder dealing with dueling brother and sister issues, the imminent destruction of his planet, a boozy sidekick, a huge dog, pal Hulk having a panic attack and the death of his father.

It was Taika Waititi filmmaking at its most intense, with slo-mo sauntering, stupid antlered headdresses, slicing swords and laser cannons, capes and undead soldiers, a hair-cropped Thor, a typically unbalanced Jeff Goldblum character, a prophecy, alien spacecrafts and lots of Led Zeppelin. If you thought that was bananas filmmaking, its sequel is the whole fruit basket.

"Thor: Love and Thunder" — a rare Marvel fourth installment for one character — has giant bleating goats, a horrible Zeus, children in cages, space dolphins, Jodie Foster jokes, teddy bears with laser eyes, an Old Spice commercial parody, Natalie Portman headbutting a villain, blue aliens and lots of Guns N' Roses.

Waititi is back as the co-writer, director and the voice for the stony Korg, with Chris Hemsworth as our space Viking, a man who really needs to get more credit for taking Thor over the years from glum to hysterical. His ability to pronounce superhero things dramatically and then become a goofball is endlessly endearing. Also back are Tessa Thompson as Valkyrie and Jaimie Alexander's Sif.

One problematic character back is Jane Foster, Thor's ex whom he still pines for eight years after they broke up and she skipped the third film. But now Foster — played by Portman — has his old magical hammer, Mjolnir, and has become a superhero of her own, the Mighty Thor. She's working on a catchphrase, like "Eat this hammer!"

Thor, of course, has moved on — not with his romantic feelings, but with his favored weaponry. He wields the enchanted axe Stormbreaker now. He has no eyes for Mjolnir — or does he? "We good? I know it's a little weird having my ex-weapon around," he asks his axe in a deliciously loony scene, basically reflecting a love triangle between a Norse god and two

metal armaments.

Our villain this time is superb: Christian Bale plays the deliciously named Gorr the God Butcher. A once-pious man who prayed in vain to the deities, he has now decided to wipe them out after having a personal setback. Bale is so creepy and so committed that you can feel his hatred melt your popcorn. "The gods will use you but they will not help you," he snarls.

Another punch of the bizarre comes from Russell Crowe, who plays Zeus as a vain-glorious tyrant with a Roman outfit (a riff off "Gladiator"?) and an atrocious Mediterranean accent. He is surrounded by lackeys — some called Zeusettes — and frustrates Thor, even stripping him of his clothes, to the delight of many in the audience. "You know what they say: Never meet your heroes," says the Viking.

The whipsaw from death and suffering to idiocy is staggering, with Jennifer Kaytin Robinson credited alongside Waititi for a script that seems like it was pasted together after gerbils ripped up a bag of words. You go from a hospital room on Earth dealing with a terminal illness to Thor dressed as a hot dog to a shadow realm in low gravity where the film goes completely black and white. There is very little logic and the connections between scenes are tenuous, giving the film a feeling of not building to anything clear.

Peak lunacy is reached at the Omnipotence City, where the universe's gods hang out. There is the Aztec God, various Maori Goddesses, the Mayan God and a round dough called Bao, God of Dumplings. It's a gag that seems out of a Mel Brooks film but the way the Marvel Cinematic Universe is going, don't be surprised to see the 47th installment called "Bao: Steam and Sauce." The film is stacked with cameos — many of which critics aren't permitted to reveal — but look for Hemsworth's real-life wife and one of his sons, a bunch of fed-up Guardians of the Galaxy and a pretty famous comedienne playing Cate Blanchett's role from "Ragnarok."

What to make of this glorious, intergalactic mess? There is no better answer than to swipe one of our hero's catchphrases: "What a classic Thor adventure, Hurrah!" □



Film scholar Jacqueline Stewart arrives at the BET Awards in Los Angeles on June 26, 2022.

Associated Press

## Jacqueline Stewart to lead Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

By **LINDSEY BAHR**  
AP Film Writer

Film scholar Jacqueline Stewart has been named the next director and president of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles.

The organization's board of trustees said Wednesday that Stewart, who previously served as the museum's chief artistic and programming officer, would succeed Bill Kramer to guide the vision of the museum beginning July 18.

"Jacqueline Stewart is the ideal choice to lead the Academy Museum into the future," said Ted Sarandos, the chair of the Academy Museum's Board of Trustees and co-CEO of Netflix. "A strong and inspiring partner to Bill Kramer throughout the period leading up to our opening, she gave indispensable direction to the curatorial program that has been so widely admired."

Kramer last week was named as the new CEO for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the organization that puts on the Oscars.

Stewart is a Chicago native and a 2021 MacArthur Foundation Fellow known for her contributions to film studies and advocacy for film preservation. Among her many accomplishments, Stewart is the author of the book "Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity," hosts "Silent Sunday Nights" on Turner Classic Movies and is a chair of the National Film Preservation Board.

In her previous role at the Academy Museum, she led strategy and planning for its curatorial, educational and public programming initiatives from exhibitions to screenings to podcasts. The museum opened last year and will celebrate its first anniversary in September.

"Our ambition in opening the Academy Museum was to give Los Angeles and the world an unprecedented institution for understanding and appreciating the history and culture of cinema, in all its artistic glory and all its power to influence and reflect society," Stewart said in a statement. "I feel deeply honored to have been chosen for this new role." □



# Hampered Nadal gets past Fritz at Wimbledon; Kyrgios next

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**

AP Tennis Writer

**WIMBLEDON, England (AP)**

— Normally so relentless from point to point, Rafael Nadal occasionally would watch as a ball off the racket of Taylor Fritz landed in during the Wimbledon quarterfinals.

Wincing from an abdominal issue for which he took a medical timeout, Nadal couldn't move the way he usually does. His trademark grunts of "Uhhhh!" were rare. He didn't generate the usual zip on his serves, which dipped from a high of 120 mph to barely above 100 mph. He sought to end exchanges with a quick-strike forehand or a drop shot — sometimes with success, often not.

With much of the Centre Court crowd loudly supporting the 22-time major champion, roaring and standing after his best strokes, Nadal figured out a way to hang in there and twice erased one-set deficits against the 11th-seeded Fritz, emerging with 3-6, 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (10-4) victory to reach his eighth semifinal at the All England Club.

Nadal extended his unbeaten mark in Grand Slam matches in 2022 to 19-0 as he seeks to add a trophy at Wimbledon to his triumphs at the Australian Open in January, then the French Open in June. For every-



**Spain's Rafael Nadal reacts after losing a point as he plays Taylor Fritz of the US in a men's singles quarterfinal match on day ten of the Wimbledon tennis championships in London, Wednesday, July 6, 2022.**

Associated Press

thing that he's accomplished, the 36-year-old Spaniard never has won the first three Slam titles of a season.

On Friday, Nadal will meet Nick Kyrgios, a 27-year-old Australian who will be making his Grand Slam semifinal debut after a 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (5) victory over Cristian Garin of Chile.

The women's semifinals Thursday will be 2019 champion Simona Halep against No. 17 Elena Rybakina, and No. 3 Ons Jabeur against unseeded Tatjana Maria. Halep advanced by eliminating No. 20 Amanda Anisimova of the United States 6-2, 6-4, and Rybakina came back to defeat Ajla Tomljanovic 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

Nadal leads Kyrgios 6-3 in their head-to-head series, but they are even at 1-all at Wimbledon: Kyrgios, just 19 and ranked 144th, announced himself to the world by stunning Nadal in 2014; Nadal won the rematch in 2019.

Give Kyrgios credit for honesty: Even he did not think this day ever would arrive. Kyrgios became the first unseeded and lowest-ranked man to get to the final four at the All England

Club since 2008 by playing what, for him, amounts to a restrained and efficient brand of tennis.

"I thought my ship had sailed," Kyrgios said. "Obviously, I didn't go about things great early in my career and may have wasted that little window. But just really proud of the way I've just come back out here."

Kyrgios, who is ranked 40th, has garnered more attention for his behavior on and off the court than his skills with a racket in hand. His match against the unseeded Garin, a 26-year-old from Chile, came a day

after police in Canberra, Australia, said that Kyrgios is due in court next month to face an allegation of common assault stemming from something that happened in December.

"I have a lot of thoughts, a lot of things I want to say, kind of my side about it," Kyrgios said at his post-match news conference Wednesday. "Obviously I've been advised by my lawyers that I'm unable to say anything at this time."

After his first-round victory at Wimbledon last week, Kyrgios was fined \$10,000 for spitting in the direction of a heckling spectator. His third-round victory over No. 4 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was as contentious as can be, and Kyrgios was fined another \$4,000 for an audible obscenity; afterward, Tsitsipas called him a "bully" and "evil."

Worth noting, too, is how well Kyrgios has been playing. His serve, in particular, is among the best in the game, regularly topping 130 mph, and he pounded 17 aces against Garin while getting broken just once — in the very first game, at love.

His big forehands are terrific, too, but little else is conventional about Kyrgios. One example: "I don't have a coach," Kyrgios said with a smile. "I would never put that burden on someone." □

## Clarke wins crash-marred Stage 5, Van Aert keeps Tour lead

**ARENBERG PORTE DU HAINAUT, France (AP)**

Australian rider Simon Clarke won a crash-marred fifth stage of the Tour de France on Wednesday while Wout van Aert clung onto the leader's yellow jersey despite coming off his bike. The big winner though was Slovenian rider Tadej Pogačar, who kick-started his bid to win a third straight Tour with a sensational ride over the cobbles to slash the gap to Van Aert to 19 seconds on a day where several of his

rivals lost time. Pogačar had a broad smile as he crossed the line.

It was a first individual win on the Tour for Clarke, who was in tears after crossing the line. Clarke had won a team time trial in the race in 2013 and also two individual stages in the Spanish Vuelta.

Edvald Boasson Hagen finished two seconds behind, at the end of the 157-kilometer (97-mile) leg from Lille Métropole to Arenberg Porte du Hainaut that went over some of

the feared cobblestones that feature on the Paris-Roubaix one-day classic.

American cyclist Neilson Powless just missed out on a podium finish but moved into second in the overall standings, 13 seconds behind Van Aert and just one second ahead of Boasson Hagen.

The day saw several incidents and Van Aert was one of the first to take a tumble but his crash came as the riders were racing towards the first of the 11 cobbled sections. He was



**Stage winner Australia's Simon Clarke, right, sprints towards the finish line ahead of Netherlands' Taco van der Hoorn, left, during the fifth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 157 kilometers (97.6 miles) with start in Lille Metropole and finish in Arenberg Porte du Hainaut, France, Wednesday, July 6, 2022.**

Associated Press

able to get back on and catch up with the peloton — although he almost went

down again as he clipped the wing mirror of his own team car. □



## Browns finally trade Mayfield, send quarterback to Panthers

By **TOM WITHERS**

AP Sports Writer

**CLEVELAND (AP)** — From being drafted first to dumped in four years, Baker Mayfield's wild four-year ride in Cleveland is over.

The No. 1 overall pick in 2018, Mayfield was traded Wednesday by the Browns, who moved on from the divisive quarterback months ago and finally sent him to the Carolina Panthers for a future draft pick.

Mayfield, who was pushed out of his starting job amid the Browns' pursuit of Deshaun Watson, is going to Carolina for a conditional draft pick in 2024 or 2025.

The Browns are paying \$10.5 million of Mayfield's \$18.8 million contract for next season, two people familiar with the negotia-



**Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield (6) warms up before an NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, on Jan. 3, 2022, in Pittsburgh.**

Associated Press

tions told The Associated Press. The Panthers will pay \$4.8 million and Mayfield will take a \$3.5 million pay cut, said the people, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because

the trade can't be finalized until Mayfield passes a physical.

However, the trade was announced by the Panthers, who will host the Browns in the coming sea-

son's opener — with Mayfield's addition spicing up the matchup.

Mayfield's time with the Browns effectively ended in March when the team traded three first-round selections and six overall to the Houston Texans for Watson, who is facing a possible suspension for violating the league's personal conduct policy.

Watson has been accused of sexual misconduct by two dozen massage therapists in Texas.

Mayfield, who played most of last season with a left shoulder injury, felt betrayed by Cleveland's move for Watson, demanded a trade and then had to wait until the Browns found a team both interested in him and willing to

take on his salary. Browns owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam thanked Mayfield for his contributions.

"From the moment he was drafted, he gave his all for this organization and this city," they said.

"With his fierce competitive spirit, he excited the fan-base and accomplished things that no player at his position had done in Cleveland for a very long time.

He also made a difference in the community, whether it was hosting events at the Boys and Girls Club, honoring our troops, supporting the Special Olympics as well as countless other charitable endeavors."

The 27-year-old will compete for Carolina's starting QB job with Sam Darnold, who was taken two picks after Mayfield in 2018.

The Panthers, who have not made the playoffs since 2017, have been searching for stability at the quarterback position ever since head coach Matt Rhule was hired in 2020. They also took a run at Watson before he chose Cleveland.

The stint was full of highs and lows, coaching changes, too much drama and not nearly enough wins.

Former Browns general manager John Dorsey was enamored with Mayfield's talent and swayed by his swagger, choosing the Heisman Trophy winner from Oklahoma first despite other options, including Josh Allen and Lamar Jackson.

Mayfield began his rookie season as Tyrod Taylor's backup before coming off the bench in Week 3 and rallying the Browns to their first win in 635 days, a 21-17 victory over the New York Jets on national TV.

Mayfield wound up passing for 3,725 yards and throwing 27 touchdown passes as a rookie, breaking the NFL record for a first-year quarterback. For the first time in years, there was genuine hope for a floundering franchise that has had 32 starting QBs since 1999. □

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